

Memoranda (on) the Palomar Baptist Camp

Robert Haley Asher



Robert Haley Asher, September 9, 1945

Robert Haley Asher was born 28 March 1868, to Josephus Marion Asher, who was the first commercial nurseryman in the San Diego area, providing buyers with fruit trees, shrubs, & vines from his Fruit Vale ranch in Paradise Valley, National City. Robert Asher settled on Palomar Mountain in 1903, and ultimately had 160 acres, living in the Pauma Creek / State Park area. Robert Asher also lived off Palomar Mountain part of the year working as a nurseryman among other things. On Palomar, Asher photographed summer campers, then developed and sold them photos; he also sold postcards off his photos, trapped animals for pelts, collected and sold wild plants, picked apples, and worked odd jobs. Asher moved off Palomar Mountain in 1946 to his sister Mrs. Josephine A. Vacher's place on Fuerte Drive in El Cajon and continued to visit Palomar Mountain until 1951. Asher passed away on 25 April 1953.

These digitized pages are from the Robert Haley Asher papers (held by Peter Brueggeman). When Josephine Vacher's son vacated the family house in El Cajon, the family gave Robert Asher materials at that location to Peter, due to his Palomar Mountain history interests. Digitization of these materials and posting them to the Internet Archive is intended to enhance and preserve access to these materials.

The Baptist Camp now known as Palomar Christian Conference Center. Dated August 4-5, 1947

the Palomar

① Memoranda in re Baptist Camp,
By Robert H. Asher, ^{1 written} (Aug 4, 1947)

I do not know just when the idea of a Palomar Baptist Camp was conceived or who originated it. Probably no one person. Bob Forbes certainly had something to do with it. I first met Bob at the ^{Palomar Mountain} post office. I think Milton Bailey introduced us. At that time Forbes was in charge of a bunch of Baptist Boy Scouts encamped at the Iron Spring on Ed Davis's property. They had had some words with George Meidenhall - some of the boys had strayed over onto the Meidenhall domains - and had - perhaps - scared some of the Meidenhall cattle. ~~Well~~ Bob and I discussed this and that and he invited me down to the camp. I remember that my old friend Douglas Forbes was one of those present ^{soon after that} ~~then~~ Bob and the troop came over to my place a ~~time or two~~ for the over-night hike and camp. The following summer they came ^{again} regular and now to go back a bit. The ^{been} country organization of Boy Scouts of America had camped in Lower Doane Valley. I was acquainted with the Scout Master ^{as Mr. Barber} and saw quite a bit of him

(12) and the boys. They were looking for a permanent camping place at the time, so I got the idea in my head that the government 40 acres just north of my Yellow Pine Camp - where I now live - would be just the place for them, I was sure they would get a lease for ten acres or more from our Uncle Samuel, and, for my part, I offered to deed them ~~100 for~~ a lot 100 feet square ~~as so~~, for their permanent buildings. The project met with ~~the~~ ~~favor~~ favor, and Mr Carl Heilbron was sent for. Mr. Heilbron was County Scout Commissioner, as I ~~have~~ remember. Word came that he would be on the mountain early on the ~~next~~ ^{a certain} day. I was on hand when the ~~order~~ ^{Scout Master gave the} order came "put out all fires!"

Two of the boys failed to put out their fire to the Scout Master's satisfaction. "Throw some more dirt, and stir it around with your fingers." "It will burn!" objected one of the Scouts. "Then it isn't out enough - put it out!" The Scouts marched across the valley and up the slope to my camp Mr Barley and Mr. Heilbron trailing after. Mr Heilbron on horseback. I had known him when he was slenderer - but he had certainly put on weight, and friend Barley very wisely had provided

3) Having a horse and saddle, arrived at the proposed camping grounds, ^{most} everybody seemed to be pleased - or at any rate - not displeased. ~~ask~~ Mr. Hilborn didn't say much - not that I could hear - but what he did say must have been favorable. Mr. Barley called for ~~some sort of~~ a meeting. The boys sat around in a circle - several deep. Mr. Barley ~~said some nice words~~ ^{made a short address} about ~~yourself~~ truly. Then some one offered a resolution to the effect that the new camp should be named "Camp Asher". The resolution was ~~promptly~~ ^{promptly} seconded - and as promptly carried - unanimously. Well, I'll admit that I ~~was~~ ~~ticked to death~~. I ~~had expected nothing of the kind~~. It ~~looked now as though I had a Roland for friend Morston's Oliver~~. But that is all it ever amounted to. When next I went down to San Diego I called around at the Supervisor's Office of the Cleveland National Forest and made special inquiry as to the prospects for the Bay Scout Camp. I do not remember the Supervisor's name at the moment, but he seemed to be very much disgusted with the dilatory tactics of the Scouts officers - it seems that he had been unable to pin them down to anything that could be approved by the

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Forest Service,

So time went on, and Bob Fleisher and his boys got around again - camping as usual at the Davis Iron Spring. Not having heard anything further from Mr. Barley I decided to put Bob next to a possible opportunity for our own Baptist boys to get in on a good thing. Bob looked things over and I thought that the project would surely become a reality this time. But no - when Bob turned up the next summer he reported that the Forest Service was dead set against ^{granting a lease for} the enterprise. It looked like a second defeat. But what's that saying ^{about} that the third time ^{being} the charm? A bright thought ~~had popped into my head~~. "Bob," I said, "I have something ^{else} to show you - that is if you feel equal to a little extra walking!" Bob felt equal - ^{to anything Bob Asher could stand} ^{assured me that he} So we crossed the canyon back to my Spruce Hill Camp, and down the trail to my Tepee ~~flat camp~~. I had ditched and piped water from the Oliver Creek and had had a good part of the flat in garden during the war years (1st World War) and was planning using the same ground for growing filices, etc. So I took him across ^{to} the ^{west side of} Oliver Creek and told him he could have the use of a certain plot just south of - but not

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touching the main Creek (Pauma) ^{was agreeable} Bob's reaction ~~was favorable~~ - at any rate he O'Kayed the pro-
~~posal~~ ^{posal} - but he added something to it. To this
day, I don't know whether he improvised for
the occasion on the theory that one good deed
calls for another - or that he and John Banya
Smith had really ^{been} talking over plans for a Palomar
Mountain Baptist Camp and Bible School ^{on the land}. Well, at any
rate, ~~he~~ told me that Dr. Smith wanted me to
give the 1st Baptist Church (San Diego) several lots
at my Spruce Hill Camp, on which it was proposed
to erect a number of buildings at an estimated outlay
of between forty and fifty thousand dollars. ~~Well,~~
That was the first I had heard of J. B.'s plans -
there would be difficulties to overcome, - also I
was not sure that a single church like the 1st
Baptist should undertake enter into such an
ambitious enterprise - and so much more than
any Baptist church is supposed to ^{undertake}. I had tried to
interest the Southern California Baptist organization
in a similar project and one of the objections was that
the church had one object - and one only - ~~the winning of~~
~~souls to the Lord~~. ~~But~~ since I had the highest regard for
However,

⑥ Dr Smith ~~was a Christian~~ and a preacher, I felt that I could not very well stand in the way of the proposed development. So I told Bob that I would be glad to have Dr Smith come up in ~~person~~ and look over the ground in person. Smith came, and selected several plots of ground above my camp and below the present Baptist Camp ~~developments~~ ^{buildings}. I had planned a Camp Site development, but did not as yet have enough cash on hand to do what would have to be done before I could sell any lots. Of course, I figured on deeding the lots Dr Smith wanted for the church, to the church, as a gift, ~~in~~ so far as the land was concerned - but somebody would have to put up the money for surveys, for a water system, for streets and roads etc &c. There we stalled ^{when we got down} ~~at~~ to the Teepee Flat - Dr. Smith did not think ^{the plot} ~~what~~ I had first offered for the Boy Scout Camp was enough. He was walking back over my garden plot. "~~Here!~~" he exclaimed, "It's just the place for the boys' swimming pool! We can get the excavate ^{to a big basin} and fill with water from the creek!" Sure enough! And so I agreed to turn over the whole of the flat to a point 10 feet east of Buzzard

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Rock. (Buzzard Rock was given that name because a Buzzard had a nest on some bushes under the overhanging rock ledge.) Rob Fleisher went away from San Diego, and Rev Dilly S. Cowles took his place as Executive Secretary of the San Diego Baptist City Missions Society ~~and~~ some work was done - a nice cabin built and water piped from the main creek. Then Cowles brought up a dozen or two of our Baptist people to look ^{over} things. They had a picnic dinner ^{all of us} sitting on the rocks beside the water of the creek. I was invited to eat with them and happened to share a big rock as a seat with Crowell Eddy. Mr. Eddy was, and still is, S. D. County Assessor. My father, the late J. M. Asher, had held down the same job for 4 years, and so Mr. Eddy and I had quite a lot to talk about. Amongst other things I learned that Mr. Eddy's Paradise Valley home was located mighty near where I used to live for a number of years after the Asher's first came to San Diego in ~~August~~ 1869. Right in the midst of all this I suddenly realized that Dilly Cowles was speaking to me. "Brother Asher," he ^{said} ~~blurted out~~, "we want you to deal us the whole of this forty acres!" It took

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me a moment to get back into the land of the living - then I did some quick thinking. "All right!" I said, ^{after a moment's hesitation} "I'll deed you the forty if you will put all the buildings and activities ~~your Baptists had been planning on for the upper camp~~ down here." This was instantly agreed to - and ~~everybody~~ ~~all heads~~ went home. Then followed conference after conference in an endeavor to work out a mutually agreeable deed and contract. I agreed to give an additional easement of 600 feet for a pipe line. Then Covles turned up with the County Surveyor and I signed an easement to the county for a road through my lands down to the Baptist Camp ^{Forty}. ^{I asked Mr. Clift's boy soon will you get the road in!} "About 8 months" he replied. ^{But a short time later} the County became involved in the 200-inch telescope observatory project and we didn't get our road ^{in to the camp} in eight months - as ~~Clift~~ ^{C. Sams} had predicted - or at all.

Came a 4th of July. The boys were in camp on Tepee Flat. Mothers and dads came as far as they could in their cars - and then ~~walked~~ ^{walked} the rest of the way. It was

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back

a fairly warmish day - and walking up
hill to the cars just about did ~~up some~~
~~finished~~ of the mother's, ~~And they were not~~ ^{now were they} at all
backward in confiding to me that it was
a perfectly awful place for a boy's camp.
~~then another incident occurred - and that~~
~~just about killed the whole project, the time~~
~~flaw and the~~ limit set for putting in certain improvements
passed - but I did not give up hope in-
timely. The hill where ~~now~~ ^{Baptist Camp} the ^{new} buildings stand
was entirely covered with a thick, high jungle
of ceanothus bushes. I did what little I could
to open up the tract so that Dr. Smith could
"visualize" just what I was trying to interest him
in. Bob Feisher came back to San Diego and
~~to his old job as Executive Secretary~~, and got some
of the ^{scouts} boys up a time or two to do what they
could. I think the poison oak did more to Bob and
the boys than they did to ~~the poison oak and the~~
lilac. And I overdid myself chopping ^{may have broken a rib} and ^{spending} was in
more or less misery for nearly two months. - So I quit
even trying to lick the lilac. ~~But I kept after it.~~

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Smith - and he and Bob Fleisher really got
to going. ^{when I was at camp} And so, one day, Dr. Smith, Jack
Taber, Ed Green and Bob Fleisher turned up at my San
Ysidro ^{cabin} place - and, ^{and, after a while} some one suggested that we
all go out and sit in the car and see if
we couldn't work out something final and
positive. The situation at that moment
stood thus: - 1. ~~The~~ The terms of the agreement
concerning the Teepee Flat Forty had not been
complied with. 2. I had offered to deed an
additional fifteen acres to connect up a small
tract on top of the hill with the lower 40 acres
~~prom~~ free of charge, provided the ^{promised} planned camp
building, ^{etc} for a Baptist Camp be put up installed
^{promptly}.
When we got into the car that day Dr. Smith
called upon me to make a proposition. I first
reoffered the fifteen acres free of cost. ^{That did meet with his} Not approval.
then I offered a certain additional amount if I
were to be paid ^{monthly} annuity for life. "How much." ^{was the next question.} The
County Old Age Pension was \$50.00 per month for life. So I
^{finally} suggested that amount. There was a little discussion and
that amount was approved as being fair and reasonable.

He members of the committee would not. I did not want to set the figure.

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But John Bunyan Smith was still not entirely satisfied. I don't know whether or not ^{it is} an Asher trail - maybe something handed down from our Scotch ancestors - John's mother was an Asher you know - Mary Asher. Anyhow, ~~my sister Josephine and J.B.S. are very much alike in some respects.~~ Well - anyhow - J.B. next came up with a demand for the whole of the creek - I still had half a mile of the creek left. Maybe you know it. Maybe not, But I have had to fight time after time to keep the waters of that stream - and some of the people that had tried to grab the water weren't any small peanuts either - but I did think that a successful Baptist Camp, such as had been proposed all along, should have the creek - but I did feel very strongly that I should retain something of my original homestead. So I said "all right!" You can have the creek and part way up on the north side providing if you will provide me with a water supply and building (comparable to what I have now at Spruce Hill Camp) at my Yellow Pine Camp on the north side near Doane Valley. Dr Smith and the others were very prompt in their

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declarations that they couldn't undertake to do anything of the kind. "Suppose we make you a cash payment," ^{Smith countered} "How much?" I asked. "We can't say how much," ^{he said} "It's up to you to say." I thought for a moment: "One thousand dollars? No - not enough - I couldn't do it on that. Fifteen hundred? No! Two thousand - maybe - but ~~they'll never agree to that~~ But - Bob my boy - you'd never willingly sell ^{the property} to a private party for many times 2 thousand ^{however - let's} say 2 thousand, and let it slide!" So I put on my bestest grim look and said: - "Two thousand!" "All right," came the almost instant reply "We will pay you the two thousand if we can make it in installments - say $\frac{1}{4}$ down and the balance $\frac{1}{4}$ each six months." I agreed to that. But then the question came up as to just how far ^{north of} ~~above~~ the waters of the creek bed our dividing line should run. I had thought 50 feet - but happened to say something about my Iron Spring. I want that ^{spring} instantly came ~~another~~ demand from J.B. "All right!" I said "you get the

(13) Iron Spring. ^{But even that didn't stop} ~~But~~ Smith was in -
satisfiable. "Bob" he said ^{Don't think you} "You had better
give us the whole of your property."
I had been saying "Yes" "Yes" "Yes", but
this was going ^{really} ^{a bit} too far. "No! No!" I blurted
out. "Don't be too grabby!" That brought
^{round of} a laugh ^{ter} from the others. I really never
learned whether they thought that that
"grabby" was a joke at ~~the~~ Doctor's ^{Smith's} expense -
or ^{at} Bob Ashers. At any rate we parted
in good humor. The ~~final~~ division line
was to be run east and west from a point
6 feet north from the center of the Iron
Spring sump hole. My understanding was that
a survey should be made at no expense to
me and that the survey should be made
soon. But - to date - no such survey has been
made - and, as a result - neither the City
Mission Society, nor yours truly can make
a proper statement to the County Assessor.

Ashers Yellow Pine Camp

Robert H. Asher

Aug 5, 1947

4:40 P.M.